Resolution on a Joint Statement by the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on European Union Development Policy: 'The European Consensus on Development'

2005/2580(RSP) - 21/11/2005

The Council welcomes the Commission’s Annual Report on the EC's development policy and the implementation of external assistance in 2004. In particular, it welcomes the provision by the Commission of a short Executive Summary aimed at meeting the needs of a broader audience and invites the Commission to focus the analysis in forthcoming Summaries on the evidence of results and impact of its assistance, including key financial information. The Council notes the overall increase in the disbursement rate of over 10%, including the 5% increase in disbursements to ACP countries, to the highest level on record but is concerned that despite an increase in 2004 of 10% in the amounts flowing to low income and least-developed countries, their proportion of Community development assistance, after rising from 32% in 2000 to 44% in 2003, has fallen back in 2004 by 0.8%. It recalls that in November 2004 it underlined the need to find ways to increase focus on the poorest, with a specific focus in Africa. As a consequence, it asks the Commission to present in next year's report a more detailed breakdown of payments, including both total amounts and percentage shares, to the different income groups of beneficiary countries, taking into account the relatively large proportion of total payments (including activities such as regional co-operation) which are currently reported as unallocable, but which nevertheless substantially benefit the least developed and other low-income countries; and also to report on measures to ensure a greater impact on poverty and inequality in middle income countries.

The Council welcomes in this context the 60% increase in 2004 in disbursements in the MEDA programme and invites the Commission to increase the emphasis of its programmes in the ENP regions on strengthening poverty-reducing growth and economic transition, encouraging democracy, good governance, the rule of law and human rights, and in the MEDA region in particular improving standards of education, especially for women and girls.

It encourages the Commission to continue to increase the impact of its programmes in the current TACIS region particularly on economic transition, human rights and on reinforcing the health sector.

The Commission is also requested to focus its evaluation efforts on analysing the reliability of such current indications in predicting the impact and sustainability of the interventions after project completion.

The Council welcomes the Commission’s emphasis on the partner countries’ ownership of the harmonisation agenda including cooperation with other donors, and its continuing efforts to help to improve the effectiveness of its assistance through increased coherence, complementarity, donor coordination, harmonisation and alignment in support of partner country owned harmonisation initiatives. In this connection the Council recalls that the Member States and the Commission can, when at the country level deemed feasible and appropriate, formulate a flexible roadmap as an instrument to indicate the steps the Member States and the Commission will take to contribute to the realisation of the country based action plan. It equally invites the Commission, in next year’s Annual Report, to report on progress

in implementing the commitments made in the context of the 2005 Paris High Level Forum on aid effectiveness, including in the neighbourhood countries. It further invites the Commission to present a thorough analysis of the framework of specific cooperation with multilateral agencies including the United Nations and the World Bank.

As regards the reforms, the Council notes that the process of devolving management responsibility to Delegations was largely completed in 2004 and recalls the assessment made recently by the Court of Auditors of its impact. The Commission is asked, in its next report, to show how it has addressed the relevant concerns and recommendations, notably on adequate professional staffing.

The Council encourages the Commission to continue the progress made on mainstreaming gender considerations and to take necessary steps for mainstreaming of other issues such as democracy, good governance and the rule of law, human rights, the rights of the child and environmental sustainability.

Lastly, the Council requests the Commission to present the 2006 Annual Report sooner after the reporting period, and not later than June each year, to maximise the relevance of the information at the time the Report is published, and to allow a better reflection of lessons learned in the forthcoming planning period.